

I. Project Title and Project Purpose Statement

The San Jacinto River Coalition Expansion Project

The San Jacinto River Coalition is currently educating and engaging the communities surrounding the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site in Highlands, Texas and now seeks to expand to additional nearby communities. The Coalition's mission is to protect water resources, public health, and the environment from the harmful effects of toxic waste. The Coalition has a large, broad based core support group for the communities of Highlands and Channelview but would like to expand to other vulnerable communities nearby with other environmental contamination issues. The San Jacinto River Coalition Expansion project seeks to engage and educate the additional lower-income communities of Barrett Station and McNair. In recent years a lot of attention has been placed on dioxin contamination of the San Jacinto River, while many of the surrounding communities' groundwater wells and public health concerns have not been fully addressed. The San Jacinto River Coalition Expansion project will introduce the Coalition to the isolated communities, strengthen the involvement of these communities and their leaders with the Coalition, and work to engage community members to find solutions to their concerns. To better understand the concerns and needs of the communities, the Coalition Expansion project will host multiple door knocking (cannass) events attempting to reach 1500 homes, lead a groundwater sampling event and will host two community forums following these events to educate local residents on the quality of their groundwater and responsible practices of owning a private groundwater well. Once the Coalition Expansion project has addressed groundwater concerns, it will host an educational forum to empower community members to develop short term and long term solutions specific to the risks in their community from climate change and global warming.

- i. Locations where project takes place
 1. Highlands, TX 77562
 2. Channelview, TX 77530
 3. McNair, TX 77521
 4. Barrett Station, TX 77532
- ii. The environmental statues the San Jacinto River Coalition identifies with are the Clean Water Act and the Toxic Substances Control Act.

II. Environmental, Public Health and Community Climate Resiliency Information about the Affected Community

Prior to the EPA, the San Jacinto River and the land nearby was highly sought after for industrial dumping by the Houston area's manufacturing and petro-chemical industries. As a result, the area became home to the first Superfund Site in Texas (the Highlands Acid Pits) in addition to several other Superfund and contaminated sites within a few miles. The Superfund Sites in the communities which the Coalition works are the San Jacinto River Waste Pits, Highlands Acid Pits, French Limited, and Sikes Disposal Pits. Residential development in the area has greatly increased in the last 50 years and is expected to double by 2040. Residents living near the San Jacinto River fear toxic exposure from Superfund and other toxic sites that have impaired the local air, water, soil, and seafood quality. There are currently thousands of residential homes in the area that receive their water from a private groundwater well. Many of these residents do not

have the education or financial resources to explore their fears of local groundwater contamination. Groundwater quality is the first environmental and public health issue the Coalition Expansion Project will address.

Following groundwater quality outreach, the Coalition Expansion Project will educate and engage community members to become involved in identifying long term and short term solutions to the unique threats from climate change to their low-lying community, which is less than 10 miles from the hurricane prone Texas Coast and next to a major river that is heavily contaminated. As climate changes and water temperatures warm, the severity and frequency of coastal storms will continue to increase. Currently, the upper Texas coast is struck on average every 6 years by a major hurricane. Along the banks of the San Jacinto River, in the path of destructive coastal storms, are numerous abandoned and uncontrolled toxic waste sites, leaving communities and first responders at risk for toxic exposure.

The communities that the San Jacinto River Coalition engages are not only located near a disproportionate amount of toxic waste sites, but they all have demographic factors that hinder coastal community resilience. These communities will benefit from the Coalitions efforts by increased awareness of local environmental contamination as well as information about public health issues. Educated and organized, the communities can better cooperate with the EPA, local agencies, and the private sector to come up with emergency preparedness and long-term remedies for the extensive environmental issues in their community that climate change will exacerbate. Additionally, the communities will benefit from the Coalition Expansion project because it will identify and engage strong community leaders from additional communities that will establish a sustainable network within the community.

The community of Barrett Station, Texas, located on the east side of the San Jacinto River and adjacent to the Sikes Disposal Pits and the French Limited continues to struggle with their environmental quality due to groundwater contamination from Superfund Sites and air pollution from the uncontained volatile organic compounds in the French Limited Superfund Site. The nearest residential home to the French Limited Site is 300 feet and the nearest groundwater well is 1,500 feet. The community of Barrett Station is over 86% African American and the average household income is less than \$36,000. Many of these community members complain of breathing complications and cancer. According to *A Flood Risk Assessment* by Texas A&M, Barrett Station has a high social vulnerability index. The community of Barrett Station has community leaders and a cohesive community but continues to need organizing tools and education regarding its local environmental and public health issues.

The community of Highlands is just south of Barrett Station and is over 50% Caucasian and the average household income is \$50,380. However, Highlands has a moderate level of social vulnerability that is driven by the large percentage of population over 65 years old. The community of McNair, which is an African American dominant community, has a very high social vulnerability index due to the disproportionate amount of children under the age of 5 years old. The community of Channelview has a lower household income than Highlands and is over 50% Hispanic. Channelview has a high social vulnerability index and has the lowest percentage of the population in the area with high school diplomas, with only 7-9% of Channelview's

population having high school diplomas. These are very vulnerable communities with huge toxic contamination problems and great potential for climate change impacts.

III. Organization's Historical Connection to the Affected Community

Before Texans Together's outreach work began in 2011 surrounding the San Jacinto Waste Pits Superfund Site, only a handful of nearby community residents knew of the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site's existence, much less of the dangers of dioxin and local fish consumption health advisories. To start to alter the public's disengagement, Texans Together's organizers canvassed 1500 nearby homes regarding residents' uses of the river, alerted residents about the site's dangers, and held neighborhood meetings. As a result of this outreach, Texans Together guided residents in forming the San Jacinto River Coalition. The Coalition has developed extensive public awareness and community support. It has established a strong resident-led leadership group, broad bi-partisan support from elected officials, and over one thousand supporters. Citizens now regularly fill government meetings to capacity. In January 2014, the EPA called a special community meeting at the Coalition's request to update the residents about the Waste Pits. Two hundred community members appeared on a cold weekday night in far eastern Harris County, calling for full remediation of the Waste Pits. Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan credits the Coalition for building the public's support for full removal of the toxic wastes at the Superfund Site, as opposed to leaving the dioxin and furans capped in the River as proposed by the potential responsible parties.

Often in the Superfund process, community members experience frustration and anger and direct these emotions at the wrong party- the EPA. The Coalition educates the local communities about not only the environmental problems but the processes involved. When the communities are educated and made aware that the EPA is not the enemy, rather the agency working to remediate the problem, the process can be much more cooperative and effective. The Coalition hosts well-attended monthly community meetings and regularly educates and engages local businesses, schools, civic clubs, and others. Through extensive community organizing and outreach, the Coalition now consists of over a thousand diverse individuals across Harris County, academic experts from area colleges, elected officials from the City of Houston, Harris County, and smaller cities, and various non-profit and business supporters. The community participates effectively in the superfund process to seek solutions to dioxin contamination of the San Jacinto River, where they recreate, and their adjacent homes.

Important factors that drive the Coalition are the communities' health and environmental concerns and creating a public that is educated about environmental and public health issues. To better understand community needs and concerns, the Coalition hosts multiple canvass events each year. The canvass events focus on gathering information about public health concerns, use of the San Jacinto River and consumption of fish from the river, as well as efforts to inform residents of upcoming events and current issues. As a result, a recent Coalition survey found that 3 out of 4 households (up from less than 1 out of 4 households three years ago) are aware of the Waste Pits and support full-removal of its toxic wastes. In August of 2014 Lois Gibbs, from Love Canal, joined the San Jacinto River Coalition at a press event at the Waste Pits and community workshop to raise awareness of the San Jacinto River Waste Pits. Additionally, Lois

gave expert testimony to community members and policymakers about ways to be effective in creating change on the local level. In addition to the Lois Gibbs community workshop, the Coalition hosts community forums when specific issues need to be addressed on a larger scale. For example, the Coalition has hosted public health forums on dioxin's toxicity, the threat of floods and hurricanes on the toxic contamination, and severe illness clusters of nearby communities. As a result of the Coalition's understanding of health concerns, they have been able to get the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to finally study the health of the communities around the San Jacinto River. Texas' DSHS is currently conducting a cancer cluster investigation on these communities.

The Coalition's scientific reports are also helping educate the residents, general public, and policymakers. At the Coalition's behest, Dr. Stephen King, a Houston toxicologist, analyzed new nearby fish and soil samples. He found continued dioxin contamination even though the site's wastes have undergone a time critical removal action of capping the wastes. He called publicly for the community to not swim or eat fish near the site until the dioxin is removed. This past June, Dr. Sam Brody, Director of Texas A & M University's Center for Texas Beaches and Shores, issued a detailed scientific report warning of the site's vulnerability to hurricanes, tidal surges and floods. He pointed out that the potentially responsible parties' expert consultants had failed to properly analyze these risks. He strongly recommended full removal of the Waste Pits because they are "a loaded gun" at "the most vulnerable of sites," the mouth of a large river within miles of the hurricane prone Texas Coast. Following Dr. Brody's report, as well as the Harris County Attorney's and Texans Together's memos on the responsible parties' consultant's conflicts of interest and deficiencies, the EPA took the unusual step of announcing that it was obtaining independent experts to study the Site. The scientific reports contracted by the Coalition have not only impacted the Superfund process, but they have educated and empowered community members. The Coalition's scientific reports and education forums have restored hope in community members who previously had felt their voice didn't matter.

The Coalition has earned extensive print, radio, and television coverage of the Superfund Site with over 25 major stories in the last two years. The Coalition's work is covered by the Houston Chronicle, Houston Press, Texas Observer, Baytown Sun, and small area papers. Both English and Spanish TV have reported frequently on the Coalition's activities. From a nearly invisible issue in its own backyard, the Waste Pits have become a major public policy issue in the Greater Houston area.

The Coalition works cooperatively with governmental agencies and serves as a representative of the communities. The EPA has worked with us in bringing the community into the Superfund process and welcomes the Coalition to submit reports and information to the agency. In August of 2014 the leader of the Coalition and Texans Together's Environmental Program Manager, Jackie Young, was the Superfund Sites' breakout session presenter at the EPA Region 6 Environmental Justice Training Session. Additionally, the EPA recently asked Jackie to be a member of the Community Advisory Committee for the San Jacinto River Waste Pits. The Harris County Attorney's Office has collaborated with us in participating in our press conferences, keeping us informed of local environmental discoveries, and letting us know when related pollution litigation hearings are scheduled so Coalition members can be present.

The San Jacinto River Coalition serves as an interface between community members, elected officials, government agencies, and other non-profit organizations. Community members lead and trust the Coalition and the diverse network that the Coalition has built. The Coalition has increased multiple communities' capacity to address local environmental and public health issues by providing residents with organizing and leadership tools and education as well as creating a trusted resource in the community. Whether residents have a concern over public health issues, a potential environmental problem, drinking water quality, or if they need assistance understanding what these issues mean for their family, the Coalition works to provide them with tools they need.

IV. Project Description

In 2015, the San Jacinto River Coalition seeks with the EPA grant to expand its efforts in the communities surrounding the San Jacinto River. The Coalition has developed a strong support base in nearby residents of Highlands and Channelview for full remediation of the San Jacinto River Waste Pits and will continue these efforts while expanding the Coalition to additional minority communities in adjacent lower income areas of Barrett Station and McNair. In addition to building a broader coalition, the Coalition will address two additional issues: groundwater quality and the potential impact of climate change on these communities. The Coalition's expanded efforts will have two primary focuses which involve the Clean Water Act and the Toxic Substances Control Act. .

First, the expansion will focus on water quality education, outreach and groundwater testing efforts. Water quality and public health are widespread concerns of residents surrounding the San Jacinto River due to multiple toxic waste sites that are located in the River's floodplain and are in close proximity to groundwater wells used for bathing and drinking water. Through the Coalitions outreach efforts, we have identified two main areas that community members need assistance in the new outreach areas. First, many owners of private groundwater wells are not aware of basic well water testing and maintenance. Second, often private groundwater well owners who are concerned about the quality of their water, do not know how to test their water, what to test their water for, or what agency can assist them. To address these issues, the San Jacinto River Coalition will canvass neighborhoods near the San Jacinto River that they have not previously had the capacity to canvass. The project goal is 1500 attempted household contacts and 400 new household surveys. By the summer of 2015 the Coalition will have identified new additional community leaders and will host a meeting to bring together current and new community leaders. These leaders are an important element of the Coalition as they can serve as the eyes, ears, and voice of these newly involved communities. Once these leaders are established, they will work together with the Coalition to create strategies for further water quality/public health outreach efforts.

In 2015 the Coalition will lead two small groundwater samplings to better understand the contaminants, if any, in groundwater wells near the San Jacinto River. The project goal is to test 25 private groundwater wells. Based on the test results, the Coalition and scientific experts will create a water quality pamphlet which will be used as an educational and outreach tool. Following the conclusion of the groundwater sampling events, the Coalition will host two

community forums to explain the test results with community members and begin planning on how to effectively address the community's concerns.

After the Coalition has addressed groundwater concerns and established a broader support base, we will shift our outreach efforts to engage and empower community members to understand community specific issues related to climate change. As climate changes and water temperatures warm, the severity and frequency of coastal storms continues to increase. Currently, the upper Texas coast is struck on average every 6 years by a major hurricane. Along the banks of the San Jacinto River, in the path of destructive coastal storms, are numerous abandoned and uncontrolled toxic waste sites, leaving communities and first responders at risk for toxic exposure. It also leaves their groundwater subject to additional toxic contamination.

In order to facilitate a more resilient coastal community, the Coalition Expansion project will work to educate and empower community members to create short term and long term goals to minimize the environmental hazards from climate change in their community. Many residents may be aware that they live in a floodplain, but many are not aware that they live near abandoned toxic waste sites. When the next hurricane strikes the upper Texas coast, or the next flood of the San Jacinto River, the communities will have a greater chance to minimize exposure to contaminated floodwaters if they are informed about the hazards. Once community members are educated about hazards in their community, the Coalition will assist them in setting reasonable goals to minimize risks and maximize resiliency. The Coalition will involve local emergency planning committees and local government officials in this process.

In conclusion, our project expansion seeks to involve additional low income communities in the Coalition to protect the health and environment from toxic contamination of the San Jacinto River's nearby residents. It also seeks to expand all these communities' understanding of their groundwater quality, and how their groundwater and other environmental toxic problems will be exacerbated if climate change is not addressed.

V. Organizational Capacity and Programmatic Capability

Texans Together has well-designed accounting systems in place to account accurately for all federal and other project restricted funds. Texans Together separates bookkeeping duties among several persons and has multiple checks and balances to ensure all funds are recorded and spent properly. Federal grant funds, like all grant funds, will be received and noted by our office manager in a transaction registry and deposited by our Executive Director in our main bank account. The deposit receipts and copies of all checks are kept by the office manager in an organized manner by date and project for tax and audit purposes. The organization's third-party professional bookkeeper has a separate income chart of account in QuickBooks Pro under grants for each restricted grant as well as expense sub-accounts for each restricted grant for each expense.

As for expenses, the office manager receives copies of all invoices and the funds are approved by the Executive Director in writing. All expense information is sent in a transaction registry with

the documentation to the third-party bookkeeper for entry into our chart of accounts' system. Salaries and personnel time for each grant are allocated monthly to each grant under an expense category. This allocation is based on time sheets kept weekly by the organizers and staff.

The third party bookkeeper then reconciles the transaction registry to the online bank statements, and the expense documentation, to make sure that all revenue and expense accounts are accurate. The data is then entered into the chart of accounts by restricted grant with subaccounts for expenses. The Board President and Treasurer review the financial statements and chart of account details monthly for accuracy and present the financial statements to the board every other month. At the end of the year, an outside independent CPA audits our books and accounts to verify all funds are accurately accounted for and allocated properly to the correct grant. To manage the expenditure of project restricted funds so that all goals are met, the President and Executive Director have timelines for benchmarks and projected monthly expenses, which they review monthly for variances. This is to ensure funds are spent at a rate and manner to meet the deliverables. Any significant variances must be accounted for by staff. The board also receives reports and reviews project progress.

Applicant has managed over \$1.9 million in restricted funds over 8 years from foundations, corporations, individuals and local governments that are required to go for only specific projects or purposes. All funds have been spent properly per our audits.

Texans Together has managed successfully over 20 public education and organizing projects over 8 years of comparable size or larger. We specialize in education, outreach and organizing of modest-to-low income communities, particularly of color, in the Greater Houston area. Since 2010, we have been educating and organizing residents surrounding the San Jacinto Waste Pits Superfund Site to provide their input into the EPA's decision-making process. Our program has established a resident-led Coalition that meets monthly, conducts outreach regularly at major community locations, holds community wide forums several times a year, and greatly increases public attendance and participation in the decision-making process. We assisted residents after initial outreach in forming the San Jacinto River Coalition which has over 1000 supporters and is the recognized leader of the community related to the Superfund Site. The Coalition works closely with the Harris County Attorney and the EPA to ensure residents are informed and full participants

Texans Together's staff is experienced in environmental outreach and education. Charhonda Cox, executive director, has supervised carefully this project, since 2011. She has 20-years experience with community organizing and outreach in lower income communities across the United States, primarily with the Service Employees International Union. This project is headed by Jackie Young with Chris Schillaci. Jackie has a degree in environmental geology and has run the project, growing it for over 18 months into a strong coalition, with growing and diverse membership, expanding policymaker support, earning regular media coverage, and dissemination of important scientific reports procured by Texans Together grants. Chris, who is Latino and bilingual, has been effective in reaching out and engaging the Latino community and media.

VI. Qualifications of the Project Manager (PM)

Jackie Young is the Environmental Programs Manager at Texans Together Education Fund. She currently holds a Bachelor's of Science in Environmental Geology from the University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL). As an Undergraduate, Jackie focused her research around environmental issues in the small town her family called home, Highlands, Texas. Additionally, she assisted a joint research project between UHCL and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate Center of Excellence's Coastal Hazard Center located at The University of North Carolina. This study evaluated small coastal communities in both Texas and North Carolina in order to understand what facilitates and hinders post-disaster housing recovery.

Jackie's efforts as an environmental leader began when she was a junior at UHCL. Through a case study in her hydrogeology course, she discovered her surrounding environment in Highlands, TX was likely the cause of her family and animal's illnesses. Young began applying the principles she was learning at UHCL to her life and the environment around her. She and her mother began going door to door and found that many of their neighbors and their animals were also experiencing unexplainable health issues.

It is through this personal experience that Young developed a passion to fight for environmental justice and to educate residents of East Harris County about environmental and public health issues. To Jackie's surprise, she lived in close proximity to four Superfund Site's, one of which had received no remediation, the San Jacinto River Waste Pits. She began volunteering with the San Jacinto River Coalition. Following graduation at UHCL, Jackie took a position full-time with Texans Together Education Fund, to continue working towards removal of the Waste Pits and relief for the surrounding communities through education and outreach.

Jackie has been leading the SJRC for the 18 months and during that time, community engagement has increased, media exposure has risen and overall awareness has grown. Earlier this year, Jackie was selected by Citizens League for Environmental Action Now (CLEAN Houston) for the Houston Heroes series *People Who Make A Difference*. An inside look at Jackie's personal journey and efforts at the San Jacinto River Waste Pits were recently published in a high profile editorial cartoon in the Houston Chronicle. The Pulitzer Prize winning cartoonist, Nick Anderson, was the first to illustrate the unfortunate events that Young's family endured and turned into action. Following Nick Anderson's cartoon, Furr High School's Environmental Communications Academy began working with Young on a documentary about the San Jacinto River Waste Pits. The Coalition has also developed a strong relationship with the local colleges.

As the leader of the San Jacinto River Coalition, Jackie has hosted over 10 press events and multiple community forums to engage and educate community members as well as the greater public. Jackie is a trusted voice of the communities near the San Jacinto River and has built strong relationships with community members, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and environmental activists across the United States.

VII. Past Performance in Reporting on Outputs and Outcomes

San Jacinto River Coalition Grants. We have received between 2012-2014 five grants, totaling \$195,000, from the Kirk Mitchell Environmental Law Fund (contact Kirk Mitchell). The funds were spent for canvassing the nearby residents, public education, media coverage, organizing the public and procuring and disseminating related scientific reports.

As for canvassing, we report in detail to this funder through lengthy reports the survey questions, the number of people canvassed, their aggregated answers, and an analysis of the findings. The two reports, which surveyed people before and after our public education campaign, compared the differences in public awareness of the superfund site, dioxins contamination and other matters and showed significant changes.

As for public education, we provided copies of all brochures and printed materials to the funder and semi-annual reports on how many materials were distributed and where. We also reported semi-annual on the building of the coalition, the establishment and size of the leadership committee, the growing numbers of public supporters, and the numerical attendance of the public at EPA and other meetings. A database is kept of all supporters with their contact information and activities.

As for media, all print, TV and other earned media is kept and provided regularly to the funder. We indicate the date of the coverage, who covered the event, the event's purpose, and a link or copy to the media content.

As for procuring and disseminating scientific reports, the three scientific reports were provided when completed to the funder with the expenses and expert's resume.

As for accounting, financial statements on the project with detail is provided to the funder regularly, and as requested, as well as the annual audit and Form 990 showing the project income and expenses for each year.

VIII. Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) Information

See Appendix I